

An  
Inaugural Dissertation  
on

Psoriasis, dry or scaly Tetter.

Submitted to the Examination of John Andrews D.D. President,  
The Trustees and Medical Professors, of the University  
of Pennsylvania.

For the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

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## 2 Introduction

My principal intention in writing this Essay, was to call the attention of Physicians to a remedy which has not I believe, been recommended in any author for the cure of Psoriasis: not to advance any thing original, as respects the causes and symptoms of this cutaneous disease; the description of which I have taken the liberty of transcribing from Dr Willan's book on cutaneous diseases, which contains a more accurate detail of the symptoms than I could have written, had the time I devoted to writing this Essay been more considerable. Presuming that I have satisfied the Professors that my object was not to have concealed the authors name, from whose book I took most of the symptoms of Psoriasis; I presumed to make some observations on the subject of this dissertation.

Wm. L. Barry

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Psoriasis is characterized by a rough, and scaly state  
of the cuticle, sometimes continuous, sometimes in separate  
patches of various sizes, but of an irregular figure, and  
for the most part accompanied with Itch, or *Pruritus*  
in the skin, sometimes as an eruption of papules  
in various figures, attended with roughness, itching,  
chaps, &c. Before I proceed to a particular account  
of this disease, it is proper to remark that the same  
has been described by some medical writers under  
the denomination of *Psora* or *Scabies sicca*, by others  
under that of *impetigo*. —  
This disease has been described as appearing under many  
forms; as *Psoriasis diffusa*, *Psoriasis palmaria*, *Psori-*  
*asis inderata*, which last was termed by the an-  
cients *Psora Agria*; Rough, and inveterate *Psora*;  
*Psoriasis gyrata*, *Psoriasis guttata*, *Psoriasis labialis*,  
and *Psoriasis infantilis*: but not having observed any  
other forms of this disease but the two first, I shall  
confine my observations principally to them, believing  
at the same time that the Remedy I shall advocate  
and most confidently recommend is applicable,  
and may be beneficially applied to every form of  
this complaint. —

The persons most subject to these various forms of  
disease, are those of the cutaneous predisposition, and  
those that have a full languid pulse, particularly  
weak and irritable women who are in general  
more predisposed to this disease than men.

It also frequently occurs in <sup>4</sup>young females labouring under chlorosis, and proves in that case very obstinate. The opinion given by Mercatorius, Sennertus, and others, that the Dry, or Scaly Pitter may be communicated by contagion, has been properly considered by Dr. Willis. I have known women affected with this disease for years without ever hearing of its being communicated to their husbands. There is perhaps more reason in the observations made by Hoffmann, that a disposition to this disease may be transmitted hereditarily; as I have observed more than one family, in those I do not think could have been communicated by contact, or having lived on the same kind of Aliment. - I have seen in some of them it did not appear until they were married and had been separated for years from their parents.

Causes - The causes of this disease are involved in much obscurity. Some have supposed the causes to be, or constant use of dried and salted meats, or crustaceous fishes, along with the too liberal use of acid wines, bad malt liquors, &c. But I believe the Proxims often originals from occasional causes, which are much slighter, have a more immediate operation. Food difficult of digestion, eating too great a quantity of acid fruits, the unseasonable use of the Cold bath,



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baths large draughts of cold water taken when the  
body has been heated by exercise, and some improper  
mixtures, as Mith and fish, are the circumstances  
to which patients refer the complaint when it  
appears in a sudden eruption on the skin: and  
such causes will I apprehend, be deemed sufficient  
to excite the disease in those who are predisposed to it  
constitutionally. The external application of cold,  
to the body when heated, has been mentioned as a cause  
of the complaint as well as the internal use of cold  
drinks, &c. - It matters not in what manner the  
body be heated, whether by heat of fires, rooms, or  
exercise, as cold produces the same effects in all  
such cases. Hence such persons are especially liable  
to it whose ways of life subject them to such vic-  
issitudes, as Smiths and other trades, that oblige  
those who work at them to be near fires, or in heated  
rooms; and such as use violent exercise or labour,  
huntmen, porters, and such like, who are too  
apt to indulge their appetites without caution.  
Women who are exposed to the same sudden  
changes of temperature, are liable to the same  
disease, as cooks, &c. It is proper to observe that the  
danger is much less in those who take cold liquors  
at the time they are heated with exercise or labour,  
they continue to pursue their labour sometime  
after drinking, than if they leave off their work  
immediately. The season of the year or temperature  
of the air materially contributes towards the pro-  
duction of this disease.

It generally occurs, according to my observations, in the spring season, when the changes of the state of the atmosphere are most frequent and severe. But on this point medical authors speak with some diversity of sentiment. Hippocrates enumerates Scora among the the spring diseases; but Avicenna places them among the autumnal diseases.

Symptoms. I shall only describe the symptoms of the Psoriasis diffusa, and Psoriasis palmars, not having as I have observed seen any other forms of this disease. The Psoriasis diffusa spreads into large patches irregularly circumscribed, reddish, rough, and chafy, with scales interspersed. It commences, in general, with numerous minute asperities, or elevations of the cuticle more perceptible by the touch, than by sight. In the course of two or three weeks all the intervening cuticle becomes rough, and chafy, appears red, and raised, and wrinkled. The lines of the skin sinking into deep furrows. The scales which form upon them are slight, of the slight and repeatedly exfoliate. Sometimes without any previous eruption of papulae, a large portion of the skin becomes dry, harsh, reddish, and scaly as before described. In other cases the disorder commences with separate patches of an uncertain form and size, some of them

them being small and some much larger. The patches gradually expand till they become confluent, and nearly cover the limb or part affected. The *Pruriginosa diffusa* is attended with a sensation of heat, and with a very troublesome itching, especially at Night. The Chaps or fissures in the skin, which usually make a part of this complaint, are very sore and painful, but seldom discharge any fluid. Should any part of the diseased surface be forcibly excoriated, there issues out a thin lymph mixed with some drops of blood, which slightly stings, and stiffens the skin, but soon concretes into a thin dry scab. This is again succeeded by a white scaling, which gradually increasing, and spreading in various directions. As the roughness, chaps, &c. disappear, a new cuticle is formed, at first red, dry, rough, and shrivelled, but which, in two or three weeks, regains the proper texture. Symptoms of general disorder attend the first appearance of the *Pruriginosa diffusa*, as headache, inappetence, pain or sickness of the stomach, pains, cramps and coldness of the extremities, with a sense of universal languor and debility. During the progress of the eruption, these symptoms abate, or wholly disappear, but they for the most part, precede any return of

of the complaint, which usually take place in winter or early in the spring. The duration of the Psoriasis is from one to four months. If, in some constitutions, it does not then disappear, but becomes to a certain degree permanent, there is at least an aggravation, or extension of it, about the usual period of its return. In other cases, the disease at the annual returns, differs much as to its extent, and also with respect to the violence of the pruritic symptoms.

The Psoriasis palmaria is a very obstinate disease of the skin and is nearly confined to the palms of the hand. It commenced with a small, harsh, scaly patch, which gradually spreads over the palm, and sometimes appears in a slight degree on the inside of the fingers, and wrist. The surface feels rough from the detached and raised edges of the scaly lamina. The cuticular process are deep, and cleft at the bottom longitudinally in various places, so as to bleed on stretching the fingers. A sensation of heat, pain, and stiffness attends the motions of the hands, and this complaint is worst in winter or spring, and occasionally disappears in autumn or summer, leaving a soft dark red cuticle: but many persons are troubled with it for a series of years, experiencing only slight remissions. Every return or aggravation of it is preceded by an increase of heat.

of heat, and dryness with intolerable itching. -  
Shoemakers have the *Brousses palmata* locally,  
from the irritation of the wax they constantly em-  
ploy. In Brazil, Timmen, Silversmiths, &c. The  
complaint seems to be produced by their handling  
cold metals. - A long predisposition to it may give  
effort to different occasional causes.

WRE - The Remedies used in these two forms  
of this disease may be divided into internal and  
external; the first are only requisite in those  
cases that are attended with a general disease  
of the system, as with syphilis which not  
infrequently occurs. <sup>2dly</sup> In those attended with  
inflammatory action of the arterial system  
the disease is accompanied with much local inflammation;  
and <sup>3dly</sup> In those occurring in debilitated persons  
the disease is attended with a placidity of the system in general.  
When there is reason to believe from the existing  
symptoms, or from the history of the case, that the  
person is affected with syphilis; which a brown cop-  
per coloured surface indicates, a mercurial course  
is absolutely necessary, and if it has been of long  
continuance, other auxiliaries should be used with  
the mercurials, as Mezerion or the Lisbon diet drink;  
together with these the local application to be here-  
after mentioned should be used.

When with the local application, there appears to be  
from the activity of the pulse much arterial excitement;

or from pain and inflammation in the affected parts, the system in general is called into sympathy. Depleting remedies are indicated, and for this purpose purging with Calomel and Salap. or Senna & Rhubarb will be one of the best modes of depleting; with which we should use gentle diaphoretics, as Antimonials, particularly if there be much stenture on the surface, or a suppression of perspiration. Should the inflammatory symptoms be violent; which may be known by the activity, hardness of the pulse, pain, tenderness, and tumefaction of the affected parts, especially if the person be of the sanguineous predisposition; bleeding will be absolutely necessary, which may be done and repeated if requisite during the use of the cathartics and diaphoretics. When using these remedies abstain from diet, and dieting drinks should be ordered with a strict adherence to cleanliness.

In the third case or those accompanied with a general debilitated state of the moving fibres or system generally; Tonics should be given to restore the proper tone or power of the system: and for this purpose the vegetable, or mineral Tonics, as the nature of the case may require should be used; allowing the patient generous diet and drink. Tho' in some cases where there did not appear to be a general disordered action, I have seen Calomel used as an alterative in doses of three or four grains very



in the aff...  
very often night with considerable benefits -  
cases of obstinate long continued Pityriasis D. Rush ob-  
served in his Lectures we should approach them  
with a trembling hand; as he conceived the stimulus  
the pain and irritation was a support to animal  
life; in such cases we should introduce issues  
if we attempt the cure; which I think would  
be less painful and more convenient to the person  
labouring under this cutaneous affection than the  
dissection as they might be introduced into the  
most convenient part of the body with equally  
good effects. —

There have been many internal Remedies recom-  
mended and used in this cutaneous disease; some of  
the following ~~have~~ I have seen used with very ex-  
cellent effects and we are told most of them  
are performed cures. They are 1<sup>st</sup> Solution of  
Mercury in Sassafras which I believe  
often cured this disease when not very obstinate.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ointment of Nitrate of Mercury, 3<sup>rd</sup> Solution of Sulphur  
of Copper, which I have been informed has  
cured this disease 4<sup>th</sup> Strong cider vinegar applied  
every day I have seen cure it after some very  
obstinate Remedies had been used without effect.  
5<sup>th</sup> Linn's Ointment has been often used and suc-  
ceeded frequently with much benefit, particularly when  
united with a small quantity of Sulphur. All  
these



These and many other applications have been used, and  
 are informed with the effect of removing the disease, and  
 but I have known most of them used without any  
 relief in several cases, all of which yielded after  
 = words to a more efficacious and less painful  
 remedy; which I can recommend with much  
 confidence, having never seen it used without  
 its being attended with more or less, <sup>and</sup> that  
 a very short time. This is the extract of Catachu, upon  
 which I believe to be a remedy that may be applied  
 to every form of Psoriasis with considerable benefit, <sup>particu-</sup>  
 particularly the Psoriasis diffusa several cases of which  
 I have seen completely cured by its application to the  
 affected parts three or four times a day; or as often as  
 the itching and burning in the diseased parts  
 it; which distressing symptoms it removes in a very  
 short time after its application. I generally use its extract  
 in the following manner; the extract to be made is  
 into a very fine powder and well mixed with a  
 much sweet cream or olive oil (the former is  
 as will make it into an ointment of common consistence, then  
 as soon as it be mixed it should be spread on linen  
 cloth and applied; never mixing more at one time  
 than is sufficient to dress the diseased parts.  
 If it does not cure the complaint as soon as  
 expected, it should be persisted in for months  
 and continued as long as any appearance of disease  
 is to be seen. I once ~~used~~ used for six months  
 before the patient was cured; tho' she had used

have been used many Comedies before it was resorted to, which  
caused me to think it was more obstinate than  
ordinary cases.

It is difficult to explain satisfactorily its mode of  
operation in curing this disease. May it not be  
virtue of its astringency blended with a quantity  
mucilaginous matter? I am inclined to think its  
good effects depends much on these two principles,  
observing their good effects when united in  
proportions applied to many ulcerated surfaces  
other causes.

To illustrate the good effects of the extract of  
a tree in curing this disease, I will take the  
liberty of stating two very caputatory cases that give  
its external use after most of the commonly used  
medicines, such as I before mentioned had been used  
with much ease and persisted in for several years,  
varying them as directed by their Physicians, with-  
out their experiencing any relief.

The first case was M<sup>rs</sup> M. — aged thirty five, who  
was afflicted with the Psoeas diffusus, before dis-  
covered; extending over the cutaneous surface of her  
hands, arms, neck, face, and ears, they being com-  
pletely occupied by the disease; attended with pain  
and considerable itching which caused her to scratch  
the parts so as to excoriate the diseased skin, from which  
there would frequently be a discharge of yellow  
coloured

coloured lymph. In <sup>14</sup>this situation she had been for a considerable time making use of the before mentioned common Remedies, before she applied to my preceptor, who gave her three or four ounces of the powder extract, directing her to use it in the manner I before observed it should be used; in less than a week she again applied for some of the same powder, observing that it removed the burning and itching like a charm and that she believed it would cure her, the disease being considerably removed. He then gave her a quantity, as he thought sufficient, to cure her, and it did to all appearance. remove the disease; when she neglected the application of this powder: in six or seven weeks the disease again appeared; she had recourse once more to this most useful of all applications yet known; and in a few days it completely eradicated this very obstinate cutaneous disease. It is now more than five years and she continues well in every respect. When she first applied to my preceptor, the parts affected were considerably <sup>inflamed</sup> to remove which she took during the first week two, or three, active purges of Calomel and Jalap, and afterwards small doses of Easton's of Antimony, so as to produce a gentle diaphoresis. It may be thought by some that these internal medicines injured cured the disease: to this it is only necessary to reply, that she had taken <sup>them</sup> frequently before she

he had been in the made use of the extract, without experiencing  
 from them any relief; consequently the external ap-  
 plication must have been the principal agent  
 in curing the disease.

The second case was M<sup>rs</sup> S. — who had laboured under  
 the Psoriasis diffusa for the greater part of five years, be-  
 fore she made use of this extract; observing which time she  
 had been under the care and direction of an eminent a-  
 physician as any in Maryland; who made use of every  
 internal and external remedy that is generally used in  
 such cases untill he despaired of curing this often for-  
 midable disease. Some months afterwards her hus-  
 band hearing of several cures made by the application  
 of this extract requested my preceptor to visit his wife, who after  
 having examined the affected parts, which were her  
 hands; and being informed by what remedies  
 she had used without effect, proposed the use of  
 the extract; which was applied with the effect of  
 mitigating the disease; but he (my preceptor) con-  
 sidering that the cure might be expedited by the appli-  
 cation of a solution of the muriate of Mercury, directed  
 her to wash the affected parts with it and not use the  
 powder untill he should see her again; which di-  
 rection she strenuously obeyed for twelve or fourteen  
 days, when she was compelled to lay the solution by  
 in consequence of the inflammation and pain pro-  
 duced by its application; observing these painfull  
 and

and distressing efforts, he once more resorted to the use of the extract which was continued for a considerable time, tho' not without performing a complete cure to the great satisfaction of the lady and her husband. When using the extract she took occasionally a dose of Calomel for the first two weeks; but I cannot think had any effect in removing the disease, because there was at that time very little perceptible alteration; and during the use of the extract after the solution of the Mercury had been applied, she did not use any internal medicine: from which I think it may be presumed that the cure was produced entirely by the application of the extract.

What I have said respecting the treatment of Psoriasis diffusa, is applicable to the management of the Psoriasis palmaria; with this exception, that it does not require the exhibition of internal medicines as frequently as the former; being more generally a local affection which seldom or never that I have observed, required any other medicine than the extract used as directed in the management of the Psoriasis diffusa. If there should appear to be any constitutional derangement it will be necessary to use the internal remedies recommended.

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during the management of the Psoriasis diffusa  
varying them as the state of the system may require.  
I have never seen any other forms of Psoriasis,  
than those two the symptoms of which I have  
enumerated; I shall not give any description of their  
symptoms, but will only observe it is my opin-  
ion from the success attending the use of this ex-  
tract in the Psoriasis diffusa, and Psoriasis pal-  
maria, that it would be one of the best extenat  
Medicinal applications to the parts affected with these  
different forms of disease; they being in my  
opinion different modifications, or grades of  
the same disease affecting different parts and  
in some cases being more violent. In such  
severe cases internal Remedies, particularly  
mild cathartics should be used with the  
external Remedies recommended in the Psoriasis  
diffusa.

I have now, gentlemen concluded my Inaugural  
dissertation. I am fully sensible of its many imperfec-  
tions; for which my only apology is the short time  
I have been allowed to compose it. I conclude without  
expressing my most cordial thanks to the professors of  
medicine in the university of Pennsylvania, for the  
kindness and attention shown me, and the many  
opportunities



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Opportunities of acquiring ~~useful~~ knowledge which  
they have severally afforded, would argue the greatest  
ingratitude.

That happiness and prosperity may attend you  
all, gentlemen, is my most sincere wish.



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the great

attend you  
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1871

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